

Comments on the proposed conservation of *Acanthophtalmus* van Hasselt in Temminck, 1824 (Osteichthyes, Cypriniformes) with *Cobitis kuhlii* Valenciennes in Cuvier & Valenciennes, 1846 as the type species
(Case 2738; see BZN 47: 118–121)

(1) Peter K.L. Ng, Angus D. Munro & Kelvin K.P. Lim

Department of Zoology, National University of Singapore, Lower Kent Ridge Road, Singapore 0511

We have reservations about BurrIDGE, Siebert & Ferraris's proposal to set aside *Cobitis taenia* Linnaeus, 1758 as the type species of *Acanthophtalmus* van Hasselt in Temminck, 1824 and replace it with *Cobitis kuhlii* Valenciennes in Cuvier & Valenciennes, 1846.

As stated in BZN 47: 118, para. 1, Kottelat (1987) was the first to show that of the four species originally included by van Hasselt (1823) in *Acanthophtalmus*, three are nomina nuda and only *Cobitis taenia* Linnaeus, 1758 is available, which is therefore the type species by monotypy. *C. taenia* remains the type species of the unjustified emendation *Acanthophtalmus* van Hasselt in Temminck, 1824. In Opinion 1500 (BZN 45: 178), however, *C. taenia* was designated the type species of *Cobitis* Linnaeus, 1758, rendering *Acanthophtalmus* a junior objective synonym of *Cobitis*.

Despite the fact that coolie loaches have been better known as *Acanthophtalmus*, we believe that the principle of priority should not be waived in this case. BurrIDGE et al. noted (their para. 6) that Kottelat (1987), the last reviewer, had indicated that the loss of the name *Acanthophtalmus* would result in some initial confusion, but they failed to add his subsequent statement, that while he could have requested the Commission to conserve *Acanthophtalmus* he chose not to do so. Kottelat (p. 372) added that '... our current knowledge of Oriental ichthyology is far from adequate,... several widely used faunae or revisions are far out-dated or based on uncritical former revisions, etc.... The introduction of the correct names causes no more confusion than the quite normal changes that will result from better taxonomy'. The problems and inadequacies in Southeast Asian freshwater fish taxonomy are many, and our experiences support Kottelat's observation that more problems like those encountered in *Acanthophtalmus* can be expected. Ichthyologists already accept that the generic names associated with their familiar species change as a result of taxonomic (rather than nomenclatural) decisions; even the complete change of name for the rainbow trout from *Salmo gairdnerii* Richardson, 1836 to *Oncorhynchus mykiss* (Walbaum, 1792) has been widely accepted (see Smith & Stearley, 1989; Gall & de Groot, 1990).

The 'representative list of 14 references' from the past 130 years mentioned by BurrIDGE et al. should be made available for general evaluation. We found only 20 citations under *Acanthophtalmus* in *Zoological Record*, vols. 112 to 125, covering the years 1975 to 1989; of these, 17 were in aquarium journals, two others were taxonomic (Kottelat, 1987) and nomenclatural (Opinion 1500, BZN 45: 178–179), while the remaining reference related to experimental work (Neyfakh, 1974). The indexes of *Current references in fish research* (Cvancara, 1979–1989) yielded only one other paper (Ferris & Whitt, 1977).

The comment by BurrIDGE et al. that the name *Acanthophtalmus* has been widely used must therefore be considered carefully. A great many references to coolie loaches

have been in popular aquarium books and journals. The popularity of fish rearing, the number of books being produced and the large number of species involved would make justification for conservation of many names quite easy if such books were to be a major criterion. Such publications are rarely concerned with taxonomy; often identifications are not checked by specialists and mistakes are repeated. If aquarists are really interested in learning the scientific names of their fish they should be able to cope with nomenclatural changes.

Although by no means discounting catalogues and guides, since they reflect use of a name by the general community, the fact that *Acanthophtalmus* has appeared in such publications would seem to be a weak argument. The number of scientific papers pertaining to *Acanthophtalmus* is few. There is not a large literature dealing with general ecology, physiology, and so on. The problems suggested by BurrIDGE et al. over the familiarity of the name *Acanthophtalmus* have been associated more with well known aquarium fish, which are usually not identifiable to species level. With this belief, we have followed Kottelat (1987 and 1989) and adopted the name *Pangio* Blyth, 1860 (type species *Cobitis cinnamomea* McClelland, 1839 (p. 304)) in place of *Acanthophtalmus* (Lim & Ng, 1990; Lim et al., 1990a and b; Munro, 1990; Ng, 1990; Ng & Lim, 1990), as has Zakaria-Ismail (1989) in his critical revision of the peninsular Malaysian freshwater fish. The name *Pangio* has also already been generally accepted in European aquarium journals. We believe that the replacement of *Acanthophtalmus* with *Pangio* will be seen as an improvement in a previously erroneous nomenclature. Consequently, we do not agree with BurrIDGE et al. that 'considerable confusion' will result from this replacement. Neither is the genus *Acanthophtalmus* as taxonomically homogeneous as they imply, and the relationships of the approximately dozen species in this genus are far from completely certain. The genus *Acanthophtalmus* includes at least two subjective synonyms, *Cobitophis* Myers, 1927 and *Eucirrhhichthys* Perugia, 1892. Recently, two species, *A. lorentzii* and *A. sandakanensis*, were transferred to another genus, *Lepidocephalichthys* Bleeker, 1863, by Roberts (1989).

We contend that the principle of priority should be applied in this case and that the valid generic name for the coolie loaches is *Pangio* Blyth, 1860.

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(2) Maurice Kottelat

Ichthyology Section, Zoologische Staatssammlung, D-8000 München 60, Germany

I entirely agree with the comment by Ng, Munro & Lim (see above). BurrIDGE, Siebert & Ferraris are dealing with a Southeast Asia fish fauna which has been neglected for a long time and this inevitably leads to the discovery of a number of nomenclatural problems. It seems to me that a good solution is one which conforms with the Code and is of immediate application. A solution which requires the use of the plenary powers and postpones the application of a name may be a correct, or 'legal', one, but is not a good one, especially if it applies to a relatively little used name. Ng et al. have mentioned the change of *Salmo gairdnerii* (usually spelled *gairdneri*) to *Oncorhynchus mykiss*; this is creating little difficulty despite the species concerned being of great economic importance and the subject of many publications each year. Therefore, I cannot imagine that introducing the valid name *Pangio* for a little known and little studied fish genus of no economic importance is likely to cause great confusion.

Both *Acanthopthalmus* van Hasselt, 1823 and *Cobitis* Linnaeus, 1758 had *C. taenia* Linnaeus, 1758 as type species and *Acanthopthalmus* was placed on the Official Index (Opinion 1500). The next two available subjective synonyms were *Pangio* and *Apua*, both authored by Blyth (1860). As first reviser I retained *Pangio* (Kottelat, 1987). This change of name is of no greater inconvenience than changes resulting from 'every-day' taxonomic practice, either splitting a genus (which is likely to happen to *Pangio*) or lumping two genera. All the works given by BurrIDGE et al. to demonstrate usage of *Acanthopthalmus* were written before my 1987 paper, including Roberts (1989) which was ready for printing by 1985 (see the front page) and not updated since. The supposed constant usage of *Acanthopthalmus* noted by BurrIDGE et al. is not supported. A number of species now included in *Pangio* (or *Acanthopthalmus*) have been placed in *Apua* Blyth, 1860 (Hora, 1921), in *Eucirrichthys* Perugia, 1892 (Perugia, 1893; Weber & de Beaufort, 1916; Smith, 1933; Tweedie, 1956; Tortonese, 1961; Nijssen et al., 1982; Zakaria-Ismail, 1984) and in *Cobitophis* Myers, 1927 (Myers, 1927; Herre, 1940; Smith, 1945; Taki, 1974; Sirimontaporn, 1984). These placements are included in half the 'catalogues and guides' listed by BurrIDGE et al. Since my 1987 paper, two more species of '*Acanthopthalmus*' have been removed to *Lepidocephalichthys* Bleeker, 1863. All this demonstrates that the taxonomy of the genus, or genera, has not yet reached maturity and many more changes are to be expected.